POEM

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY

"JACK THORNE"

Written at the request of the colored citizens' Lincoln Centenary Committee—Mr. Geo. E. Wibecan, Jr., Chairman—and read before two thousand five hundred people at the Baptist Temple, Brooklyn, N. Y., February 12th, 1909.

Meis Amicis, Rev. and Mrs. W. R. Lawton, Rev. Geo. Frazier Miller and Rev. A. R. Cooper, of Brooklyn, N. Y.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Far in the West, in forest wild,
Was born one day, to us, a child;
A man most truly great to be,
Although of humble birth was he.
No herald the event proclaimed;
No royal scribe wrote down his name.
A hut of logs rough hewn and bare,
With scarce enough of light and air;
A bed of straw, a floor of earth—
Such was the scene, the place of birth
Of him whose name the world reveres;
That grows in greatness with the years.

2

Uncouth, unlettered—yet a prince,
The impious scoffer to convince,
That God vouchsafed no right divine
To man, his fellows to confine;
To mark their bounds, their course dictate;
A royal road to greatness make,
The cabin floor, the pine knots' blaze,
Might be the medium fit to raise
Ambitious man from low estate,
To heights ennobling, truly great;
From raft of logs with peers to stand,
The applause of senates to command.

3

A grateful nation now in praise,
From loyal heart a song must raise
To God, for those who blazed the way,
For Freedom's universal sway;
For those who prayed on Plymouth's Rock;
For those who felt the awful shock
Of war with savage fierce and wild;
Who gazed in Death's grim face and smiled,
Because from tyranny's haughty sway,
The sacrifice would pave the way.

4

Yet few were those who rose above
The common trend of thought; and strove
To tear away the pall of shame,
That blurred their country's sacred name;
A sleeping conscience sought to 'wake;
The alien's galling chain to break;
Who braved the scorn of bigots base,
To succor a benighted race.
Foremost among this stalwart few,
Stood Old Abe Lincoln stanch and true
In every fibre of his frame,
He waited 'till the hour came.

"JACK THORNE"

5

Then raised on high the fiery brand,
To scourge the evil from the land
The awful storm of blood and tears,
Did rage and beat for four long years.
The world looked on in blank dismay,
As brothers struggled in the fray.
All reverence for his wisdom fled;
They heaped reproaches on his head.
Foes lurked his pathway, stormed his door
And wise men deemed his judgment poor.
Yet firm and undismayed he stood;
This rustic lawyer: hew'r of wood!

6

Although at times defeat he saw,
Yet still, he deemed it Saxon war.
Reluctantly he gave the word,
Which called forth the immortal horde.
The alien host unshackled, free,
Rose like an angry, billowy sea—
And grateful for the longed for chance,
To check the sullen foe's advance.
Let Wagner and Fort Pillow tell,
The glorious story, how they fell!
Newmarket Heights—Oh gory field!
In Freedom's cause they could not yield!

7

Up! up that rugged steep—and wide,
They climbed to glory side by side,
Or calmly laid them down to rest,
Clasped to a Spartan mother's breast.
Brave chattels from the auction block!
They faced alone the "Crater's" shock,
And changed the scoffer's laugh to cheers,
The skeptic's eyes made wet with tears.

8

And when 'twas o'er—the strife, the pain,
There lay their great commander, slain!
They raised the blazing torch on high,
To light his pathway to the sky.
Be hushed forever, lips of scorn!
In generations yet unborn,
Parents to children still will tell,
While love and pride their bosoms swell;
The rough backwoodsman of the West,
Was he who served his country best.
And nations still shall gather there,
Around the Martyr's sepulchre.

FROM PORTER TO POET.

The Literary Achievements of Jack Thorne, Former Pullman Employee.

David B. Fulton (Jack Thorne), whose poem, "Abraham Lincoln," was largely used at the recent one hundredth anniversary celebration of the great emancipator, is also the author of several published works. His first book, "Recollections of a Sleeping Car Porter," is the story of many hardships and difficulties which the author had experienced during a number of years in various parts of the United States and Canada while in the employ of the Pullman Palace Car Company. But the latest powers of his mind and the youthful ambitions of his heart were not fully exercised nor fired to patriotic expressions of indignation until the awful tragedy of the "race riots," which occurred some years ago at Wilmington, N. C., in which hundreds of his race were slain and others driven from home and their property destroyed.

The horrors of the "riots" gave birth to "Hanover," a story of the Wilmington riots, which has had a large sale. "Hanover" was followed by "Eagle Clippings," a collection of writings in answer to various criticisms of the negro race.

W. B. DODSON,
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